

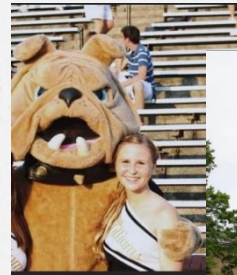


# Emotional Health/Stress Management and the Transition to College

Elon University Counseling Services

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- o Burlington, NC Native
- o My educational journey:
  - o Turrentine and Williams alum!
  - o UNC Chapel Hill Undergraduate
    - o Psychology, B.S.
    - o Medieval and Early Modern Studies Minor!
  - o UNC Charlotte Masters & PhD
    - o Clinical Health Psychology
  - o Wake Forest University, Clinical Internship at WFU Counseling Center
  - o Elon University, Groups Coordinator



# The Transition to College

Transitioning to college marks an important milestone in life. It is a time for celebrating achievements and looking forward to new experiences. This is a time of significant change for students and their families that will bring with it excitement and stress.

# Sources of Stress

For parents/family members:

- o Is my student ready?
- o Is the family ready for this change?
- o Can we afford this?
- o Will they have what they need?
- o How will I be able to let go?
- o Who will be there for them when I am not there?

# Sources of Stress

For students:

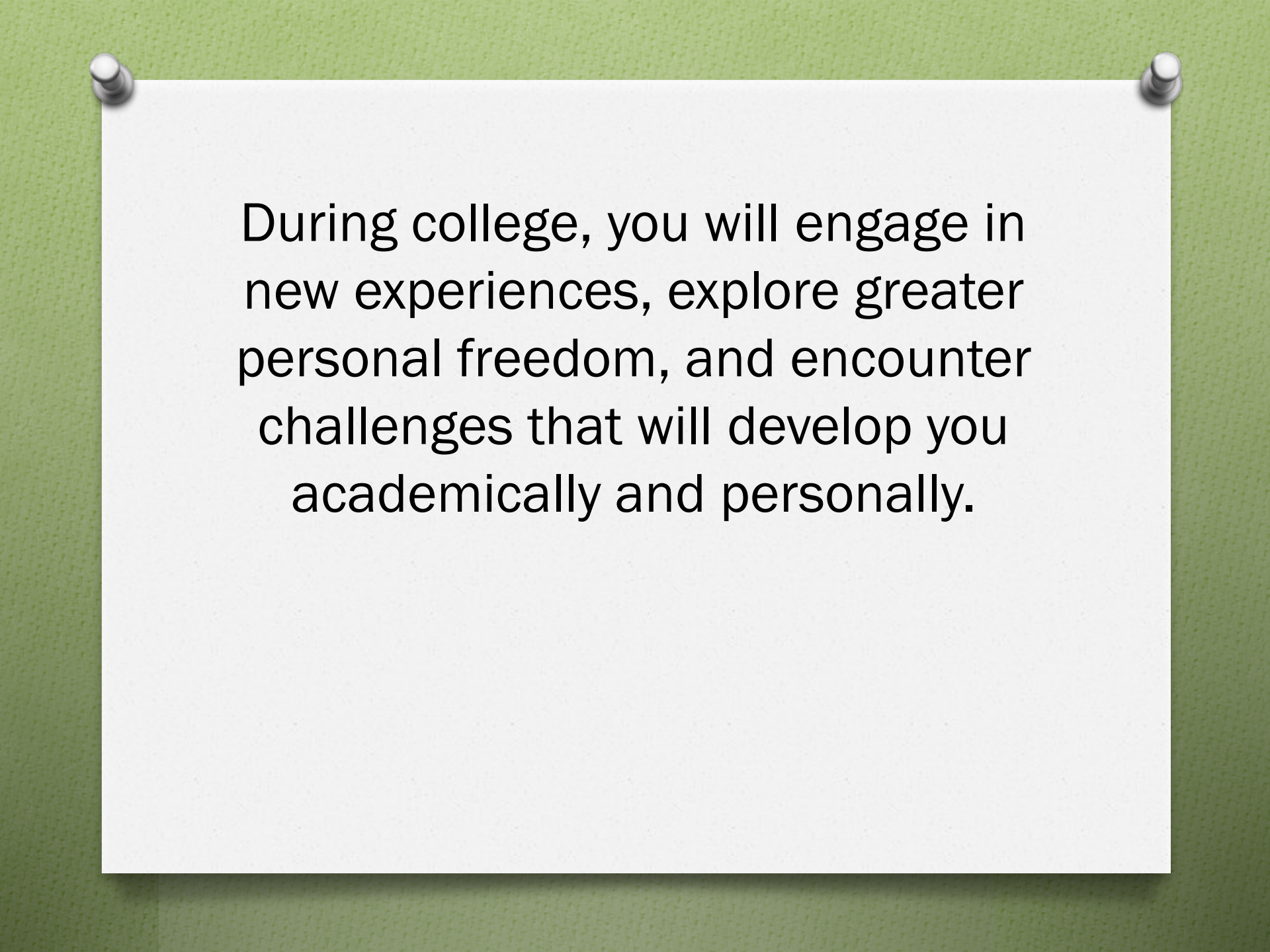
- o Am I ready?
- o Can my family afford this?
- o Will I fit in/find “my people”?
- o How will I change?
- o What will be happening in life back home?
- o Will I make my parents proud?
- o Will I be successful?

# What's on your mind?

- o On one side of the card- write down particular concerns or worries you have about your or your student's college transition.
- o On the other side of the card- write down ways you feel proud and/or aspects of the college transition you are most looking forward to.



Now, Let's Talk about It



During college, you will engage in new experiences, explore greater personal freedom, and encounter challenges that will develop you academically and personally.



# Managing Expectations

## Keeping in touch

- o Anticipate that you will miss each other
- o Consider what is reasonable for communication
- o Students- share your challenges *and* positive experiences
- o Parents- share what is happening back home and in your lives

# Managing Expectations

## Letting go

- Homesickness is normal but it is important to find ways to make connections at college
- Let your student handle most of their problems and make their own decisions and mistakes. Listen, support, and guide - but resist the urge to be the “helicopter” or “lawn mower” parent
- Learn about the resources on campus together and encourage your student to use them

# Managing Expectations

## Grades

- o College is different than high school
- o Accept that the typical A/B student is likely to experience other letters of the grading system over the course of academic study

# Managing Expectations

## Freedom and Responsibility

- o No wake up calls or curfew in college
- o Talk with your student about important issues (self-care, alcohol/drugs, safety)

## Changing and Building Relationships

- o Evolving Identity–Who are you now?
- o Keeping up with family and friends at home

# Emotional Health

- o Common counseling concerns:
  - Adjustment concerns/Homesickness
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Relationship concerns
  - Family Issues
- o 1 in 5 youth and young adults experiences a mental health condition
- o During college years is a time that mental health concerns are likely to present.

# Emotional Health

## Common signs and symptoms of stress:

- o Persistent feelings of sadness or being withdrawn
- o Overwhelming fear or worry
- o Lack of energy or motivation
- o Difficulty making decisions
- o Feeling on edge
- o A change in eating habits
- o Sleeping more than usual or difficulty getting to sleep
- o Being more emotional
- o Using alcohol or drugs to relieve stress
- o Back pain or muscle tension
- o Tension headaches
- o Gastrointestinal problems

# Emotional Health

## Know-Plan-Do:

Talk about any family history of mental health concerns or suspected mental health concerns

Identify the counseling resources are available on campus and how to access them

- o Where is the counseling center?
- o What are the office hours?
- o Who are the providers?
- o What after-hours or crisis response services are available?

If there is a history of mental health concerns

- o Consider making an appointment to link with a counselor in the early transition weeks
- o Explore community resources
- o Prepare for continuity of care, including medication management

# Emotional Health

If you are a loved one concerned your student is struggling:

- o Reach out. Express your concerns with your student.
- o Normalize and encourage students to ask for help. Keep an open dialogue about mental health not just first semester or first year, but throughout the college years
- o Contact college staff. If your student is unresponsive when you reach out or you think the issue could be serious, contact a campus mental health professional, dean of students, or other staff member.

Excerpted from the JED Foundation . Starting the conversation: College and your mental health.  
August 2016





# Questions and Sharing